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"A Message to the Church."

TEMPERANCE SERMON

BY

REV. ARNOLD PINCHARD,

In the Town Hall, Birmingham, on

TEMPERANCE SUNDAY, NOV. 26TH, 1905.

Birmingham and District Auxiliary of the
United Kingdom Alliance,

ASSOCIATION BUILDINGS,
DALE END, BIRMINGHAM.

ROBERT MCFARLANE,
Secretary.

ONE PENNY.

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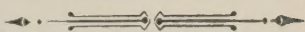
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A MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH.



THE REV. ARNOLD PINCHARD based his sermon upon the words "*If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever would save his soul shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his soul for my sake, the same shall find it.*" He said:—My business this afternoon, as I understand the matter, is to attempt to touch those well-springs of enthusiasm, and of sincere and deep desire for righteousness, by the power of which it will be possible for you to move upon lines of action and of policy which will be laid before you for your acceptance to-morrow night. I am speaking to you as a Christian man to Christian men in the face of a monstrous and intolerable evil, which is sapping the life and goodness of the people, and which, while on the one hand it is making many rich in the good things of this world, is causing a great mass of the people to be poor, in a sense which goes deeper, and which is more terrible to contemplate than that mere material poverty to which we generally refer when we speak of the poor; an evil which is making men intellectually, morally, and physically poor; an evil which is wrecking the minds, and bodies, and souls of those for whom Christ died, which is making them unworthy citizens even of this evil and wicked world in which we live, and which is robbing them of their birth-right in the Orient Heavenly City in the kingdom of Heaven. My appeal to you in the face of this monstrous

evil is the appeal of a Christian man to Christian men. I say to you that you cannot sit supine, that you cannot rest content, that you dare not remain indifferent in the face of this terrible fact; and that if people are found who sit supine, and who are indifferent, and who do nothing, then that is because they have not begun to understand what is the very essential and fundamental element of real Christianity. The essence of Christianity is in a life; it is not a matter of an opinion but of a life. Your Christian does not merely believe certain things, he does not merely admire certain things, but he does the things which he must because he is under the compulsion of the Divine love. Show me the man who admires this, and says he believes the other, and does nothing in the face of wrong and unrighteousness and injustice, and I will show you a man who is either a self-deceiver or a conscious hypocrite. The Christian life is an active life, a life of service, a life of self-sacrifice, in the power and under the compulsion of the Divine love. "If any man would come after me," if any man would be a Christian in deed as well as in name and in word; if any man would walk in the way—and I am the way, Christ says—let him first of all deny himself, let him sweep aside all the things that he counts dear, all the things that the natural man demands, and take up his cross daily, not occasionally, when he is moved by some overwhelming enthusiasm, but daily let him take up his cross and follow me. There are two ideas suggested in connection with this thought of taking up the cross. First, there is the thought of Christ and His Cross, and then the thought of the Christian and the Cross, the universal necessity, the inevitable obligation, of the man upon whose lips is named the sacred name of Jesus. Christ was crucified because He set His face like a flint to do righteousness, because He represented the passionate unsparing love of God

for man, because he affronted all the powers of evil ; and His cross was at once the way of his conflict, and the symbol of His victory. Whenever a man, in the name of God, sets himself against evil, takes his place among the ranks of those who fight under the banner of God and on the side of righteousness, he must face his crucifixion. The world has not changed in temper or spirit, though it may have changed in its method, since the days of our Saviour's death and passion. Christ and his Cross are the eternal symbols of the life of a Christian who follows him. Always he will have the world against him ; always he will be made to suffer in his person, in his prospects, in his ambitions, in his hopes, in his body, in his affections, and in his soul. The world is cruel and remorseless, and goes its own way regardless—except where there is strong conflict against it—of the opposition of righteousness. The necessary corollary and consequence of Christ and His Cross is the Christian and the Cross. Bearing a cross comes to a man never except when he deliberately sets himself to put on the armour of Christ, to raise the shield of God before his breast, and to bear the blade of the Son of God in his hand, and to step down into the arena of conflict and to strike a blow for his Master and for righteousness. Then he begins to bear the cross, and it is that that is required of every one of us. The matter with our Christianity is that it is supine and respectable and indifferent to evil so long as it is comfortable itself. The matter with it is that the real spirit of the love of the brethren, the real spirit of the passionate self-devotion of the Christ does not touch it, and finds no place in it, for the most part. We are far too much intent upon the salvation of our own souls ; we are sublimely and disgracefully forgetful of the primary obligation which is upon us to lay down our own soul, to risk the loss of our own soul, if so be we may render

some service to God for the salvation of the souls of our brethren. The true spirit of a Christian is found in Saint Paul when he said I would I were cut off, that I were anathema, that I were under the curse of God and damned for ever rather than I should fail to help forward the salvation of my brethren. Now that is the spirit of the Christian. I ask you, do you recognise that spirit in the majority of Christians of your acquaintance ; are they deeply, passionately concerned about the sins, and the sorrows, and the pains, and the losses of their brethren? Are they not smug, self-satisfied, respectable, idle and lazy in the great conflict against the powers of evil? It is a terrible thing that we should have to hold a meeting like this in the twentieth century. It is a thing, not to be proud of, but to be ashamed of, that I should preach, and that you should need to be preached to and should listen, in order that we may stir one another up to do the commonest and the most obvious duty. It is a terrible thing to think that while we flatter ourselves that we live in a Christian country the real facts of the case should be such that it is only by a mere shuffle and juggle of words that we can dare to call this country Christian at all. After a thousand years or more of Christian teaching we are far from being a Christian country, and the proof of it is to be found in many directions, and in many facts, but in none more significantly or more certainly than in the horrible and tremendous evil of the drink traffic with which we are face to face to-day. It is a thing to be ashamed of, it is a matter of deep regret that England should be so far, and in so beastly and degraded a manner, far from the realisation of the commonest ideal of civilised life. What a commentary upon her complacent profession of superior Christianity in the face of the Continent of Europe ! But this is no time nor place for vain regrets, nor is it my duty to enlarge upon that. We have to deal, if we have any manhood or faith in us,

if we have any courage or anything of the spirit of Christ in us, with things as they are, not to dream vague and idle dreams of what things might have been. There is before our eyes this horrible evil, with all its terrible attendant consequences of demoralisation and degradation in human nature. The drink traffic, with its pernicious effect, has crept upon us, step by step, degree by degree, until the interests that are gathered about it, and which centre in it, have become so great a force and so irresistible a power for evil in this country that it would almost seem to be wholly and completely invincible, and it is invincible to any power, political or social, which you may organise; but it is not invincible before the power of faith, before the power of God, before the power of deep passionate Christian conviction of the evil of it, and of the foundations upon which it is built up. The Church has been asleep while this thing has crept degree by degree, like some horrible disease, passing from man to man, from woman to woman, and from generation to generation; so sound asleep, so dead to her duty, so indifferent to the obvious claim of stricken humanity, that she has taken—to her eternal shame—handsful of gifts from the very people who are fattening upon the lives and souls which have been committed to her charge. For the sake of social power and social consideration and influence the Church has played the traitor in this matter to God, and to the nation to which she was commissioned and sent by God. But now we are awake, now we are face to face with the facts, now we are realising the horror in its naked shame, and we ask ourselves what must we do. First of all we must strip ourselves of all that holds us back from Christ's service, we must strip ourselves, as an athlete strips for a contest, of all that hampers and hinders, all considerations of worldly popularity, all hope of the achievement of worldly ambitions. Deny yourself,

count the cost, and then take up the cross, then step forward and say : " Lord I am not worthy, but take me ; and if I am worthy, make something of me, and in my feebleness let Thy strength be made manifest. Accept me, destroy me, only let me serve, only let me for one brief moment of my life feel the glorious triumph that is his who forms in the service of love. I take up my cross ; do Thou give me power to bear it in face of a hostile world." That is the first thing to do, to make up one's mind, and to determine that in this particular matter we will make no kind of compromise, we will submit our judgment never, or allow for a moment the excuses of the world ; that we will go on for God and for the sake of the souls and bodies of our fellow-men in scorn of all the consequences, to do from day to day what the occasion demands. One of the very first things that we have to do is to make it quite plain that we will have no dealings with the unholy thing in any shape or form whatever. When a man has amassed great riches by being the owner of a vast number of tied houses, upon what is his fortune built up ? Oh ! on shame that should make him cover his face with his hands, on the spoils of crucified human nature, on the degradation of man, woman, and child, in body and soul and spirit. If that thing had happened to me I hope that God would have given me grace some day to be so ashamed of my money and the way that I had got it that I should slink round the byways of my city for fear men should know me for the thing I had done. (Applause.) Oh, yes, you clap, but what do you do before this rich brewer ? Do you clap this sort of sentiment then ? Do not we adorn him with titles and honours ? Do not we conveniently forget the thing that has been done—although the man may not personally be to blame—and make excuses ? And we condone it in this city, condone it in every city of the Empire ; and the men who have built up their fortunes on this hideous plan sit up above

us in places of honour and renown, while we have our hats off and bow before them in the streets. It is not very popular to say a thing of that sort, it does not mean worldly success. Say it up and down the streets until men are ashamed that this thing should happen. So, then, by precept and by example—for God forbid that by my meat any other man should perish—let us try with all our might, even unto death, to be faithful unto the Divine principle of self-sacrifice and loving service. You have great power in your hands, you have the invincible power of the faith that is born of Christian conviction, and you have the power of citizens of a vote. Use it, not at the bidding of this demagogue or of that, but for the glory of God and for the salvation of the bodies and souls of your fellow men. Is it in vain that Christ makes this appeal to human hearts? Out of sordid, miserable homes, by the mouths of little children that are naked and eaten with vermin, and starved and beaten and poisoned in their minds and souls with filthy words and filthy sights; out of the foul mouths and by the foul words of women, unsexed, demoralised, disgraced, who bring into the world children upon whom is fixed the shame of a dreadful heritage, unfit to take their place among their brethren; out of the mouth of men, drink-soddened, demoralised, degraded, incapable of thought, and work and service, sunk—oh! I say it—below the level of the beast. Christ is naked, Christ is hungry; Christ is being drunk to death by baptised men and women, and he calls to you in the cry of the little child, in the harsh scream of the drunkard, in the man who strikes in the blind fury of his drunken passion. It is Christ who calls in a thousand voices out of the slums of this and a thousand other great cities; and I do not believe that there is among all of you who listen, not to me, but to His call, one who will close his heart, one who will not say, “Lord, teach me to deny myself; Lord, give me Thy choice, and afford the grace whereby I may serve my brethren with self-sacrifice and devotion.”

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